

VZCZCXRO3060  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #2067 1700943  
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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5143  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC//NSC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0496

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 002067

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/16/2016  
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SUBJECT: INITIAL EMBASSY MEETING WITH STATE MINISTER FOR  
CIVIL SOCIETY AL-ASSEDY

Classified By: POL COUNS Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d).

1.(SBU) In a June 14 meeting with PolCouns and PolOff, newly appointed State Minister for Civil Society Adil Al-Assedy told PolCouns that he was committed to advocate for civil society and would work to expand and develop its role in Iraq. Assedy said he wanted to expand civil society as a channel between the people and the government. Citing CPA order 45 as a basis, Assedy said that his goal was to develop modern civil society institutions and that he planned to focus on human rights, education, health issues and vocational institutions. Assedy said he welcomed international assistance in building civil society organizations and would cancel all registration fees for foreign NGOs to encourage them to work in Iraq.

2.(C) PolCons welcomed Assedy's remarks, stating that his efforts and the work of his ministry would make it possible for Iraqi society to thrive and complete its progress towards democracy. In response to PolCouns' query on the status of the newly proposed NGO draft law, Assedy said that he had read the draft and believed it needed some adjustments and compromises. Assedy expressed concern that civil society organizations and NGOs could easily be a front for terrorist organizations and said that the proposed draft law may not be strong enough to deal with NGOs controlled by terrorists or other fake NGOs. Assedy said that while he did not want to interfere with the work of NGOs, the monitoring provisions in the proposed law weren't strong enough to protect civil society from these abuses. PolCouns responded that while regulations to ensure transparency in accounting and registration of NGOs were normal, the Ministry and government of Iraq must apply these rules evenly and with a light hand. If civil society is to prosper, the government must not be seen as unduly restricting it.

3.(C)BIONOTE: Adil Al-Assedy belongs to the Islamic Labor Organization. Assedy fled Iraq to Iran at the age of 15 and from there went to the Kurdish Province of Sulaymaniyah. From Sulaymaniyah he went to Syria, where he stated he worked with local media outlets and operated a micro-lending NGO. With the fall of Saddam, Assedy said he moved to Karbala, where he continued to operate a micro-lending NGO that helped open up small businesses and provided funding and other assistance which allowed men to get married. Assedy has been to the UK at least once but does not speak English.  
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